

Every Child Learning Every Day



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READY TO LEARN

Books for April

By Dr. Stan Steiner

Children learning about their world is a marvel to observe. Here are some books to smile about.

"Where's My Sock?" by Joyce Dunbar, 2006, Chicken House. There's only one pair of socks Pippin wants to wear, but he can only find one sock. In an all out effort, with his friend Tog, they are determined to solve the missing sock mystery. A turn of events ends with an unexpected surprise for both Pippin and Tog.

"Time to Say Goodnight," Sally Lloyd-Jones, 2006, HarperCollins. Pre K. Chapman's adorable illustrations combined with rhyming text make a perfect bedtime book for toddlers.

"Germs Are Not for Sharing," by Elizabeth Verdick, 2006, Free Spirit Publishing. A good beginning to healthy habits for toddlers is the focus of this board book.

"Overboard!," by Sarah Weeks, 2006, Harcourt. Parents of inquisitive toddlers will relate to this developmental stage of exploration. Throwing things such as toys out of the crib and playpen or food over the side of the high chair becomes a fun game sure to get the attention of an adult.

Dr. Stan Steiner is the chairman of the Boise State University's Department of Literacy. He can be reached at (208) 426-3962.



Remember our unsung heroes on May 12

Dear Reader:

Provider Appreciation Day is a special day to recognize child care providers, teachers and educators of young children everywhere.

This year's celebration is set for May 12, and marks the 10th anniversary of the event that was launched to recognize the importance of this profession.

According to national studies, more than 2.8 million people teach and care for young children every day. Research also shows that the early years of life are a critical learning time for children.

Early childhood care providers and educators are some of the most underpaid professionals,



Dr. Marilyn Howard
Superintendent of Public
Instruction

yet they provide a critical service for parents and our nation. They truly are unsung heroes.



It takes a special person to work with young children every day. Provider Appreciation Day offers an opportunity to recognize their contribution.

Whether it is simply saying thank you or perhaps giving a small gift, remember to take time May 12 to thank those special people who interact with your child every day.

I'd also invite you to visit <http://www.providersfirst.com/> for ideas on how to celebrate.

PHYSICAL ACTIVITY

Get in some spring training with indoor baseball throw

Physical Education (P.E.) Central is a website (www.pecentral.org) where educators and others share lesson plans for activities aimed at different age groups.

Below is a preschool activity from that site.

Activity
Baseball throw

Purpose of activity
This activity will give the students the opportunity to learn and practice the overhand throw at a target.

Materials needed

Cut baseball players out of large sections of cardboard and decorate by having students draw and paint on the cutouts.

Tape the player on the wall. Plastic grocery bags (rolled into balls and taped) are used for baseballs. Use a restraining line, such as a jump rope, to keep students about 5 feet away from the target.

Description of idea

This activity brings the fun of throwing baseballs inside where it is warm, and can be a good activity on blustery spring days! Stu-

dents throw the balls to see if they can hit different parts of the target.

Count how many times the balls strike the target.

Adaptations for students with disabilities

Move target closer to the students if they don't have the strength to throw the balls to the target. Using the plastic grocery bags, you can roll the balls into smaller sizes for students with smaller hands. The rolled bags also allow for better gripping.



PARENT TIPS

Newsletter provides information for dads

All parents need information. They need knowledge that will help them understand children, provide a healthy environment and nurture their children to adulthood.

Father Times, a father-centered parenting newsletter, specifically addresses the important relationship of fathers and father figures and their young children. *Father Times* works to increase fathers' knowledge, provide fathers with confidence and promote healthy parenting practices. It is also appropriate for mothers or other caregivers of young children.

Father Times is a practical parent education tool grounded in research. It provides a proven, father-friendly approach to sharing information and ideas with men as parents. It includes a variety of features designed to teach, share examples, encourage discussion and provide activities that fathers or father figures and children can do together.

Each issue features:

- A father's story or experience
- A research-based look at what young children of different ages need to develop in specific areas
- A short summary of research on fathers and children
- Activities for fathers and children
- Lists of books for fathers and kids
- Idea boxes and other elements designed to assist fathers to understand and support children.

Fathers and father figures contribute significantly to a child's development and well-being when they are involved in positive, meaningful ways. *Father Times* is adaptable and designed for use in a variety of settings. It has been used in early childhood programs, kindergarten, parent education centers, prisons with incarcerated fathers, social service agencies, community education programs, businesses and other areas where fathers and father figures can be reached.

Newsletters are available in both English and Spanish. For information email sbrother@ndsuxent.nodak.edu or call 1 (701) 231-8113.

NUTRITION

Planting garden fun project for young children

Planting a garden is a great experience for young children.

Gardening is a fun activity that you can do as a family. Planting a garden helps children learn that plants, like children, need food and water to grow strong and healthy. Plus, children tend to want to eat and try different fruits and vegetables when they have planted and watched them grow in their garden.

A garden can be planted in a backyard, a two-foot patch of dirt on the side of a home, or in pots and buckets that can be stored in a sunny part of your home. There are many

different vegetables and fruits your young children can plant. They are easy to grow, too.

Some plants you can grow with your young children are lettuce, tomatoes, strawberries, beans, and even Idaho potatoes.

An easy way to get started is to plant a bean sprout. Children are amazed to see a simple bean become a living plant, and it takes just a few days.

To start, help your child place one dry bean, such as a lima bean, in a zip-lock bag with a

moist paper towel. Place the bag in a warm place, and have the children check the bean daily.

The bean should sprout in a few days. Once the bean has sprouted a set of leaves, your child can plant the sprout in a small pot with soil. As your child waters and feeds the plant it will continue to grow, and may become large enough to plant outside.

Your child can then continue taking care of his or her bean plant every day until fall when the vegetables from the plant can be harvested and added to your family's meal.

SMART STARTS

Build decision making skills from the beginning

Decision making is a skill that falls under the realm of many areas; cognitive, social, emotional and language.

Birth to 1 year: Routine is one of the most important aspects of the early stages of life. It is important to tell your child what you are doing as you go through daily routines such as diapering, feeding and interacting. This early interaction will begin laying the foundation for strong language skills which become important when it comes time to express their decisions.

1 to 3 years old: You can model decision-making by talking

through a process, such as deciding what to make for dinner. Think out loud.

3 to 5 years old: Ask for your child's opinion when it is appropriate, for example, if you need to go to the store but have the option of taking your child, ask him if he wishes to go with you, and follow through with his decision.

When there is no option explain the situation to your child, allow him time to process the information and give other choices such as a toy to take or allow him to pick an item at the store.

Skills needed for kindergarten-

ten: Children need to make decisions independently and be able to express those opinions appropriately.

Books and other resources: "Proactive Parenting: Guiding Your Child from Two to Six" by [Tufts University's Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Development](#) and "How Babies Talk" by [Roberta Michnick Golinkoff Ph.D.](#), [Kathy Hirsh-Pasek Ph.D.](#)

Smart Starts is a column of everyday activities to help parents and early childhood caregivers build school readiness skills in young children. It appears weekly in the Idaho Statesman.

ACTIVITY

Watching busy squirrels can spark curiosity

By Jennifer Williams

2002 Idaho Teacher of the Year

Squirrels are everywhere right now, looking for food. Mother squirrels are also gathering materials for nests and their springtime babies. Building a squirrel tree is fun and an opportunity to have your preschoolers talk about what they see.

Questions to help your preschooler think, imagine, speculate, and appreciate wildlife might include:

What do you think the squirrels like to eat the most: peanuts, corn, sunflower or pumpkin seeds?

Why does a squirrel have a long tail?

Do squirrels make any noises?

Do squirrels like to share with other squirrels?

What does a squirrel use for his bed?

Do you think squirrels are cute?

Would squirrels make good pets?

Materials:

Coffee can or bucket filled with sand, tree branch, scissors, string, and construction paper

A variety of items for squirrel food and squirrel bedding (cotton balls, strips of paper, yarn, scraps of cloth, peanuts, corn on the cob, sunflower and pumpkin seeds, etc.)

Procedure:

Find a sturdy branch and stick it into a can or bucket filled with sand.

String food items and bedding materials to hang from the branch.

Tear strips of paper (construction and newspaper), plus pieces of cloth and yarn. Lay or tie these onto the branches.

Place the can on a deck or under a tree and begin to watch for squirrels. There may even be some crows or magpies that want to join in the feast.

Replace items as the animals take them away.

Children can tell a story or draw a picture as they watch.